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[I am Navy Medicine: Lt. Courtney Pollman-Turner](#)

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By Lt. Courtney Pollman-Turner, clinical psychologist, Naval Hospital Pensacola



I followed a winding and enlightening road to become a clinical psychologist in the Navy.

In 2003, I received a commission as a naval officer through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps program at George Washington University and reported a few months later bright-eyed, bushy-tailed and a little bewildered to my first command.

I was assigned to the USS Ross (DDG 71) as a surface warfare officer (SWO). The days I spent aboard this ship earning my SWO pin were some of the most challenging I've ever experienced. I left the active duty component some years later and eventually pursued an advanced degree in psychology so that I could continue to serve in a capacity that more closely suited my strengths and my passions. In 2015, I accepted a commission in the Medical Service Corps and bid farewell to my days as a SWO.

Friends often tell me that my job as clinical psychologist sounds hard. I am faced daily with the struggles and stressors of other service members, veterans and their families. I tell my friends, "I love my job," and because of this, I just cannot think of my job as hard.

What I do find challenging is sustaining myself and nourishing myself both physically and emotionally so that I can continue to be at my best with my patients. The practice of self-care is often something that does not come naturally to those of us in the military. We devote so much of ourselves to the care and protection of others that sometimes we forget to take care of ourselves. This is something that I see my patients and co-workers struggle with as well.

During my time as a SWO, I learned something about Sailors that took me years to realize, that each had a unique identity within the working environment and outside of the Navy. They were boyfriends, brothers, fathers, friends, wives, mothers, sisters and daughters. They liked gun shows, mountain biking or cross-stitching; they were all very different people coming together for a common cause.

Now, as a clinical psychologist, I understand that I am more than just a naval officer and I believe that this is the key to self-care, which is something I try and share with my patients. We would do well to remember that the Navy's strength stems from its diversity, which is comprised of all of us as individuals.

I now see how much more effective I could have been as a SWO if had I better cared for and respected the unique aspects of my identity, and I work daily to encourage others to give themselves the same respect. Just think how incredible the world would be if we all left work on time so that we could get in that evening workout or be home in time to share dinner with the family. I believe that the Navy is strong as a force because of the diversity we seek to promote, and we will only grow stronger if we respect that same diversity within ourselves.

I'm Lt. Courtney Pollman-Turner. I am Navy Medicine, and I am also so much more, as are you.

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